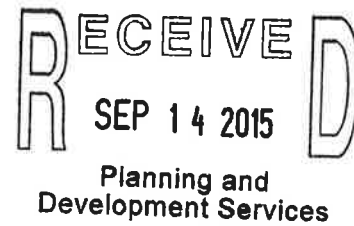


September 12, 2015



Mr. Darin Neufeld, AICP

Planning Manager

5510 Overland Avenue

Suite 310

San Diego, CA 92123

RE: El Monte Sand Mine & Nature Preserve

Dear Mr. Neufeld:

I would like to express concerns over many aspects of this project. As a small ranch owner and in El Monte Valley and Physician Assistant in Urgent Care, this will have a big impact on my quality of life and may well cause me to have to give up my ranch.

I. SAVE OUR WATER

The El Monte Valley is the third largest aquifer in San Diego County. The sand there provides a natural filter to keep the water clean and uncontaminated. The residents of the valley are all on wells and there is no infrastructure in place to provide water to us, so if this project goes through and the well water is gone or contaminated we essentially will have to move away and take the loss as the properties will not be usable. The Helix Water District did have a project going several years ago to use the sand in the valley to filter water from another source with wells but gave up this project due to costs. With the sand mining project digging to a depth of 100 feet over 265 acres this large aquifer will no longer be accessible for use after mining begins. Millions of gallons of usable water will be spent for their mining work and more lost in evaporation with the large open gash created in the aquifer itself.

Contamination of the aquifer with diesel spills and soil organisms and nitrogen oxides/nitrates is an environmental concern and could very well make the water downstream and even some ways upstream unusable. As far as I know the water rights to this aquifer may not even belong to the Helix Water District but rather to San Diego City or County. What gives this El Monte San Mine water rights to this valley? The wildlife in the valley and migrant wildlife will be affected by loss of their habitat and food. It will also cause permanent loss of agriculture potential in this valley. I cannot see how people with a conscience and morals can approve this waste of water in a drought in San Diego. You cannot drink sand and can live very well without it.

After the mining is done in 15 or 30 years (that part is up in the air), the large area of stagnant water left by this project offers the opportunity for increased water contamination when we do receive our occasional big rains in the winter with a good chance of significant flooding and washing away of large quantities of soil.

## II. PUBLIC HEALTH CONCERNS

- 1) Coccidioiodomycosis or Valley Fever is a big concern during the sand mining and transport of this soil for visitors and residents in and around the El Monte Valley. These fungal spores are known to be in the area. One of the dogs belonging to one of our customers at the ranch developed a lung infection from this. Our customer spent a lot of money treating her dog for this and he was seriously ill. Other people in the valley have claimed to have been treated for this infection. The mining project will stir up a lot of dust with the spores being able to travel for miles on the winds. There are many school children who come to visit the Van Ommering Dairy in this valley as well as Oma's Pumpkin Patch as well as all the visitors who come to climb and hike or enjoy El Monte Park.
- 2) West Nile Virus is still a public health concern all over the country and is transmitted by mosquitoes. With the large body of standing water created by this project how many birds, animals and humans will be impacted by this infection?
- 3) Poor Air Quality is a concern. Fumes and increased particulate matter from this project and increased traffic may affect certainly those with lung problems like asthma, emphysema, COPD, silicosis or asbestosis. Evidently there are greenhouse gases associated with aggregate mining and cement manufacture. Diesel emission of nitrogen oxide combining with hydrocarbon emissions in the sunlight create ground level ozone. Is silicosis a concern with the sand in the air?

## III PROTECT SCENIC EL MONTE VALLEY

El Monte Valley Road and Willow Road are designated "scenic corridors" and will certainly no longer be scenic with a large sand mining operation which is ugly in the extreme in anyone's view except for those making money from it. El Monte Valley is currently a popular recreation destination with the lake at the east end of the valley, beautiful El Capital peak to hike to, and El Monte Park. The increase in noise, traffic and air quality will all add to detract from any visitor's experience here. This project will disrupt the wildlife corridor through this valley. There are native American artifacts known to be in El Monte Valley and these could be irreparably damaged and lost.

The El Monte Valley is home to a lot of wildlife. I had the incredible honor of seeing a golden eagle about 0.25 miles from my ranch perched beside the road about 5 years ago. Other raptors are frequently seen like the red tailed hawk, Cooper's hawk, falcons, Great Horned Owls, and barn owls. I am not a naturalist but the area needs to be looked at as far as it providing habitat for endangered reptiles, birds, and insects. I am an amateur bird watcher and have noted a wide variety of birds which come and go in the valley.

Please save this beautiful El Monte Valley and consider all the grave consequences of allowing this El Monte Sand Mine to cause so much damage. There will be no "nature preserve". The pattern of these companies is to stop their operation and claim they are not through mining or some other excuse and no restoration ever occurs. I would love to hear of one that came through with a valuable restoration at the end of their project.

Respectfully yours,

Robyn Bodecker, PA-C

Mailing address: 4263 Mt. Putman Avenue, San Diego, CA 92117

My ranch: 14660 El Monte Road, Lakeside, CA 92040

Phone 619-884-9197

E-Mail [rbodecker@san.rr.com](mailto:rbodecker@san.rr.com)

